TESTIMONY OF PATRICK MCCLELLAN

STATE POLICY DIRECTOR

BEFORE THE

JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE

2017-2018 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

February 13, 2017

The New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) is encouraged by the Executive Budget for 2017-18. The State's growing commitment to clean water, clean air, open space, and fighting climate change is commendable. We are happy to see, and support, the Governor's proposals for: a $2 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act, testing of private wells and small water systems, a $300 million commitment to the Environmental Protection Fund, mandating excess food donation and food scrap recycling for large food waste generators, and reform of the forestry management tax credit.

Before I continue, I would like thank you for your support for the environment last year and in years past – the 2016 budget fully funded the Environmental Protection Fund for the first time because of the leadership and dedication on this issue in both legislative chambers over many years. The Executive Budget's focus on clean water is also a testament to the concern and commitment shown by both the Governor and the Legislature for the health of the people of New York.

CLEAN WATER

NYLCV strongly supports the Governor's proposed $2 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA), which would allocate $400 million per year for five years, a vital step toward our goal of $800 million per year for water infrastructure projects. We are particularly pleased that the CWIA authorizes funding for a wide variety of initiatives including infrastructure projects like pipe replacement and advanced filtration systems and source protection projects including conservation easements and green infrastructure.

We also support the Governor's proposed legislation to require testing for water systems that serve fewer than 10,000 people and private wells at point of sale, or every five years for rented properties. More than two million New Yorkers are served by small water systems – they deserve the same assurances of drinking water quality as those served by larger systems.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND

NYLCV is thrilled to see a $300 million commitment to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for the second year in a row. The EPF funds projects in communities large and small across the state and preserves open space, protects farmland and agricultural activities, conserves ecosystems, invests in

waterfronts and parks, mitigates climate change, and advances environmental justice, among other uses.

Within the EPF, we are pleased to see $7 million allocated to environmental justice initiatives, including $1 million to connect children with the outdoors, $2 million in community impact grants, and funds to monitor air quality at hot spots to be identified. We applaud the $2 million for children's environmental health centers and $625,000 for the Fresh Connect program to expand access to fresh and nutritious food in underserved neighborhoods.

Additionally, NYLCV believes that the EPF's funding for parks is vital, particularly the proposed $20 million for municipal parks, $30 million for state land stewardship, and $16 million for waterfront revitalization. We also support the Governor's legislation to increase the State match for the Waterfront Revitalization Program from 50% to 75% of a project's cost, which will benefit both disadvantaged urban areas and smaller towns and rural areas.

Finally, we are heartened by the proposed continuation of EPF funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation, which is an important component of preparing for the impacts of climate change, both those that we are already experiencing and those still to come.

We thank the Governor for his commitment to the EPF and the Legislature for your leadership over many years on EPF funding.

FOOD WASTE

The Executive Budget's proposal to require large generators of food waste to donate excess edible food and recycle food scraps is a thoughtful, well-crafted policy that will benefit emergency food providers, reduce the amount of compostable waste going to landfills, and create a statewide organics recycling infrastructure that will make it easier for municipalities to adopt their own organics recycling programs should they choose to do so. By delaying implementation of the mandate until 2021, the State ensures that organics recycling facilities will have time to establish themselves and undergo a careful siting process. The proposed legislation wisely exempts New York City due it its preexisting organics recycling mandates and leaves room for municipalities to regulate food waste from generators that produce fewer than two tons of waste per week annually if they so choose.

FOREST MANAGEMENT TAX CREDIT

NYLCV supports the Governor's proposal to reform the 480-a forest management tax credit and add a new 480-b tax credit. Taken together, these reforms would lower the threshold for participation from 50 acres to 25, allow up to 50% of the credit to be applied to open space, and increase the carbon dioxide reduction benefits of the program by as much as 1 million tons per year. Current beneficiaries of the 480-a program would be grandfathered into the new program. The Governor also proposes to provide grants for best forest management techniques and acquisition of community forests, and to provide financial relief to local governments most impacted by 480-a.

In keeping with our commitment to open space and the benefits of spending time in nature, we are also supportive of the Empire State Trail and Adventure New York proposals, and we continue to support investment in the Parks 2020 initiative.

AGRICULTURE

NYLCV strongly believes in the importance of protecting New York's farms and farmland and connecting

residents across the state with healthy, locally grown food. We are particularly pleased by the proposed $500,000 expansion of the Farm-to-School grant program, which connects farms with school districts; funding for the Agriculture in the Classroom program to teach students about where their food comes from and the importance of healthy eating; $35.7 million for the New York State Grown & Certified program; and the EPF-funded programs to preserve and provide technical assistance to farms.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND CLEAN ENERGY

Electrification of the transportation sector is an important component of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, which is why NYLCV supports State programs to reduce barriers to electric vehicle ownership and operation. We support the Governor's proposal to extend the Alternative Fuels Property and Electric Vehicle Recharging Property Credit and add 69 electric vehicle charging stations to the Thruway. We continue to support the electric vehicle consumer rebate that was authorized last year, and we eagerly await its implementation.

We support the Governor's proposal to work with other Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative states to lower the emissions cap by 30% between 2020 and 2031. We note, however, that $23 million in off-budget assessed RGGI funds were transferred to the General Fund. NYLCV believes that all RGGI funds should be dedicated to clean energy programs.

NYLCV is the only statewide, nonpartisan statewide environmental organization that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action. NYLCV engages over 100,000 conservation voters across the state to be effective advocates for the environment.